

**Statement by Brian Schwarberg  
before the  
White House Conference on Aging Solutions Event  
Wednesday, July 6, 2005**

My name is Brian Schwarberg. I am the Public Policy Director for the Greater Illinois Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association.

At the Alzheimer Association, our mission is to enhance care and support for individuals, their families, and caregivers and to eliminate Alzheimer Disease through the advancement of research.

To that end, we support the following efforts. Though in this case I am addressing issues that are part of the current public policy platform in the state of Illinois, these are issues that are important to persons with dementia and their caregivers nationwide.

**EXPAND AND PROMOTE HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED OPTIONS:**

Public funding for long-term care programs is biased in favor of institutional settings, yet 70% of all people with Alzheimer disease live at home and family and friends provide 75% of all care at no expense to the state or federal government. While this is the preferred option for many, not all Illinoisans can access the services they need due to limits on program capacity, geographic barriers and income restrictions. We are dedicated to protecting funding for all state and federally sponsored home and community-based programs.

**QUALITY TRAINING FOR DEMENTIA CARE:**

The single greatest factor of quality dementia care in all settings is the competency of direct care staff.

In order to ensure quality care, the Alzheimer Association supports innovative strategies to train qualified personnel in the home, the community, and licensed care facilities.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE:**

The Alzheimer's Association seeks to ensure essential protections and opportunities for people with dementia, including

- Financial incentives to encourage those who have the time and resources to do so to plan for their own long term care needs, including the purchase of long term care insurance

- Monitoring the long term care system in Illinois, ensuring the accessibility of the full range of dementia care options and settings, including quality services for home and community based persons.

## **Research:**

The Alzheimer's Association is the largest private contributor to Alzheimer's disease research. Since 1982, the Alzheimer's Association has granted more than \$165 million in research grants.

But this is one place where only government can make the essential difference.

The Alzheimer's Association calls on Congress to appropriate \$1 billion for Alzheimer research at the National Institutes of Health.

As baby boomers enter the age of greatest risk, Alzheimer's disease will become the public health crisis of the 21st century. By the middle of the century, the number of new cases will increase by nearly 1 million each year. The total with the disease will explode from an estimated 4.5 million today to as many as 14 million by 2050.

If our elected officials are serious about saving our health care system and controlling the costs of Medicare and Medicaid, they have no choice but to increase -- immediately and substantially -- their investment in Alzheimer research.

We have 10 years at most to prevent disaster. If we miss that chance, Alzheimer's will bankrupt family, state, and federal budgets as up to 14 million baby boomers succumb to the disease. The investment in research is well worth the cost and the payoff will be enormous.

Thank you for your consideration.